

Iran Poses a Puzzle in Practical Politics

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The Shah of Iran, who is our current guest, brings in his person what may be the acid test of the new administration's agonizing choice between pretty political theory and hard realities.

He is a story-book king of the ancient chronicles, a sergeant's son with a genuine wish to lift his countrymen out of the helpless poverty that has engulfed them for centuries, yet a monarch as absolute as any left on earth. His very life hinges on the loyalty of his oversized army and its extravagant officer caste.

The latter-day prophets of the New Frontier have brought down some new commandments from their academic mountain-tops, among them the stern rule that U.S. money shall not perpetuate authoritarian regimes or fatten an entrenched aristocracy. Social and economic reforms

turn in neighboring Turkey, but he had a great deal farther to go.

Iran is still, outside a few cities, primarily a loose confederation of tribal fiefdoms right out of the middle ages. Its economy is feudal, pastoral and village-centered.

About 1,000 families, centered in Teheran but banking abroad, dominate the vast and ancient land which stands between Russia and the warm seas.

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi is the principal stabilizing element in a situation so ripe for revolution that Khrushchev contemptuously dismisses it as "inevitable."

Though he has carried out an ambitious and enlightened campaign of distributing to peasants more than 3 million acres of his private estates and crown lands, hardly any of the

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